

[Alcoholic World War Veteran]

Tales — Anecdotes (World War and ex-soldiers [?])

STORIES OF AN ALCOHOLIC WORLD WAR VETERAN (HATCH)

(Introduction): - War

It was Sunday afternoon. A cool breeze was blowing from the East River and the sun was warm. In a parked taxicab opposite a garage on First Avenue, the interviewer talked to Huey and his brother. Huey's brother, whose first name was not obtainable, was rolled up asleep in the back seat of the cab. From time to time he awoke and made interjections. The interviewer sat in the driver's seat with his typewriter on two iron bars which extended beneath the meter. Huey sat on the small extra seat in back of the cab. Twenty five unoccupied cabs were lined up Oct 5 '38 Tales - Anecdotes [?]

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NEW YORK [3?] Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch

ADDRESS 862 First Ave. New York, N. Y.

DATE Oct. 5, 1938

SUBJECT STORIES OF AN ALCOHOLIC WORLD WAR VETERAN.

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1. Date and time of interview

Sunday afternoon Oct. 2, 1938

2. Place of interview

Parked taxicab of Sentinel Cab Co., Allied System, across street from its garage between First Ave. and East River, on 48th St.

3. Name and address of informant

Huey Davison. "You have a room on Second Avenue have you not" I asked. with a dramatic, decisive, even proud wave of his hand: "No address", he answered.

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Huey's brother, whose first name I didn't get, was rolled up in the back seat of the cab. He wakened and made interjections from time to time. Huey sat on the small, extra seat in the back of the cab. I sat in the driver's seat with my typewriter on two iron bars that extended beneath the meter. Huey laughed and talked through the window opening, through which by now some millionaire may be calling destination instructions. The day was pleasant with a cool breeze from the east river and a warm sun above. Twenty five unoccupied cabs were lined up and down the street in front of the blank wall of an abandoned or unused warehouse.

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch

ADDRESS 862 First Ave.

DATE Oct. 5, 1938

SUBJECT STORIES OF AN ALCOHOLIC WORLD WAR VETERAN

1. Ancestry Irish descent but speaks clearly, quickly and without brogue of any kind.

2. Place and date of birth

Probably born in America or came to America very young. Both men about 55 years old.

3. Family

The information on this page is necessarily sketchy. All New York alcoholics, penniless, engaged in committing suicide the slow way, are suspicious. When Huey went away to buy a bottle in the middle of our interview his brother said I could get a certain story from him. I said I would ask him for it when he returned. "No" said his brother "If you ask for anything he won't answer a word."

4. Places lived in, with dates

New York and in Europe during war.

5. Education, with dates

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"Did Huey have a good education" I asked his brother. "No. We [?] were more interested in fishing in those days." Probably not over a common school education. Made few grammatical errors.

6. [????], with dates

The two brothers have stuck together through life and are now engaged in drinking themselves to death, together. Besides joining the army together they worked as bell hops in hotels. Tis was all I could get from them without awakening suspicion.

7. Special skills and interests

Both were skilled buglers in the army)

8. Community and religious activities

Very affable and good hearted. "Don't they say something to you for sitting in these cabs, sleeping here. "No No they're all good sports. If they take out this cab we'll take the next one."

9. Description of informant

Huey is emaciated, red-faced, slight, clothing not noticeably poor. His blue eyes belieing his woe-begone face gleam out of their red background with slyness and devilment. His brother had a rougher, coarser face and heavier figure. One wondered how such happy, bright remarks could come out of such a battered, poisoned head.

10. Other Points gained in interview

see extra comment

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch

ADDRESS 862 First Ave. New York

DATE Oct. 5, 1938

SUBJECT STORIES OF AN ALCOHOLIC WORLD WAR VETERAN

Huey: "Now can you just keep your mouth shut"! Brother: "First thing you'll do is give me the price of a half pint". Huey: "He's a wash out". Huey: He'll give you the price of a half pint don't worry. Now I can't do your stuff you gotta ask me the questions. How about some butts? Oh. That's right you don't smoke. That's Ivanhoe, one of the toughest cigarettes in the world". Brother: "Away goes your typewriter if you take a drag out of this. Its pipe tobacco but its all we got." Huey speaking:

I was fooling around in 1917, working for an express company. So we decided to go to the war. We were all young fellows. So we went into that war game, we walked into a certain place on 46th St. and the doctors. One is by the name of O'Connell and the other was Nelson. So we all walked it in there. He said to us, "How many of you men want to go to camp right away?" Out of 45 men there was only two that stepped forward. Doctor, "Now you two step back again". But we insisted so we went to Camp Upton, We don't know what happened to the other gang. Separated. I went with an engineer to France. My partner to the 77th Division, Lost Battalion. He's dead and I'm here. When we hit Camp Upton. Wait! We started to hit the camp, in Hoboken a gentleman there was. A barber in the city of N. Y.,

the Company barber, decided he could get away with it. He didn't have to go to war. So we landed on the Hoboken docks. When we hit the docks the first thing they said was "Throw your pack on the left shoulder mad walk up the gangplank!" This gentleman thought he could beat it by putting his pack on his left shoulder and falling down. This gentleman, at this time, goes up the gang plank. He's got it all framed up how to beat the draft. So he goes up the gangplank. When he gets in the middle of the gangplank he falls down pack and all. Ha! But they fooled him. Three sailors ran down the gangplank and threw him on the ship pack and all. And the next time I met him was on the British front with the greatest barrage they ever had. They made him a cook in the outfit to keep him back of the lines. And comin' back after the armistice. All during his time in France he was 'ritin' to his sweetheart in the United States and building up his moustache. He had one of the most wonderful moustaches. He was trying to beat the Kaiser out at that time a nice big black moustache. So we pulled through to the Embarcation point at Bassens outside of Bordeaux, Genoucourt. This party that's telling you the story now is the only person who ever sounded the boat call, as sounded by the United States army in the A. E. F. and I sounded it at Bassens docks. (In further explanation of the barber's purpose in falling down the gang plank) Instead of getting him from the bottom part and taking him ashore they run from the top part and took him aboard. So he didn't beat the draft.

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There was a cook over there Was was a Polock. We were livin' in billets now this cook every night he used to get drunk and we were 3 livin' in billets and General Pershing give the order we had to put our shelter halves up. This cook came in every night. He had the right of way to come in late but he used to step on everybody. He step on your feet he would step on your hands he would step on your feet. Oh, every night we used to argue with him. We raise hell with him but we couldn't do anything with him. So we decided one night we would change the subject. We were billeted up over a barn. Plenty of cows and

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horses below, with the big hay door open. So we decided we would fix the cook up. So we had few francs, so we went out and bought a fromage, cheese, if you parlez-vous francais, [fromage?] that's [roquefort cheese?]. It sounds good. So when he came in that night nobody said anything to him and we let him go to sleep. As soon as he went to sleep and when he went sleep and we was sure he was asleep we wrapped his hair in that Roquefort Cheese, get it and the Rats were very plentiful there at the time, (laughter on our part) wait but there's the pay-off. Wait till I get through with the pay-off. So you know the door where they have block and fall, where they bring up the bales of hay, upstairs? Were you ever on a farm? So we were all laying there. We couldn't get no sleep to see what's going to happen. Finally he comes in. Stepped on Meek, stepped on other guy, they all squawked. Walk right on your feet, hands everything. Goes over and he lays down. So after laid down it was our turn to let the rats to ride to him. As soon as he lays down and goes to sleep two guys wait. As soon as he goes to sleep start in snoring, take the roquefort cheese and spread it all over his hair, head and everything. Now this guy was a tough guy this cook. He had 'em all beat. So finally about three O'clock in morning there's an awful uproar in the ?

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joint. We were upstairs over the cows. He jumps up and he runs like hell. You know where he run? Right out through that window. Right out that window on the second story. That's true I'm telling you. We had it fixed up for him. As soon as he reached up and found the rats in his hair he went right through the goddam window. Just an ankle broke. He's a casualty of the war. Ha! Ha! That's the only way to figure it out. He's on relief now.

* * * * *

So long as we don't mention no names its O. K. Wait 'til I figure the year now. The year that, the year that Rosoffs didn't clean the center of the streets where the car tracks were. Did you ever tell a proposition. Go ahead, We'll write it up. One night I'm roaming around so finally I stop a man on the corner of 96th street. I said, "Will you please lend me five

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cents. I want to get down-town". So the gentleman gave me the five cents. I go out and [get a bus on Second Avenue?]. I get aboard the bus and I got a package. A couple of old shirts I want to wash up, in my hand. So I'm riding down second avenue on this bus, and all of a sudden the bus hit a bump of ice in the middle (Rosoffs') and I wound up on the floor. And the bus driver, as soon as I fell on the floor, he pulled the bus right over to the curb and locked all doors. I didn't even know what was the matter and neither did the rest of the passengers. He didn't ask me if I wanted any medical aid or anything else. So finally they were all sitting there and a big car pulls up. I don't know the license of the car. A swell car a, Buick eight, pulls up. And he takes me out the side door of the bus, takes me into his car. So he says, "Here you're allright ain't you?" I said to ? 5 him "Yes sure, call a doctor to find out if I'm all right." He says to me, "No. no we won't call no doctors." Says, "Get in my car here and sit down." So I get in his car and sit down. Brother, interrupting very politely, as he gets out of cab. "You'll have to excuse me a minute, I'll be back". Huey continues Says, "Here'e says Says, "Here's \$5.00 O. K. "He says "Sign this." So what" "Sign it." "No," I says I'm gonna sue the company for, for, well, my injuries. He want me to sign a blank sheet. What a dope I'd be for christ sake. He'd make \$1500 on the sheet. Wants to get my signature. So he stayed with me allnight. He stayed with me allnight. I says, "Listen, do you think I'm a dope to sign that goddam sheet?" So lets see the sheet again. So this time he's got the sheet fixed this time. He went to the toilet. He brings it back. Had one five but he could raise it to fifteen hundred. You know, he had one in front of the five. You always gotta be careful what you sign I was a dope once before that. [I went and signed?]. I failed anyway. "I tell what I'll do with you. Give me five bucks and I'll quit. He brought me in he car right to 61st Street. So he's got the blank sheet. [But I didn't sign nothin'?]. That ended it then.

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Do you want to use a little humorous one? Now all the gentlemen who are hanging around the Municipal Loding House, and I am one of them, having very much trouble getting rid of lice, understand? What I'm always wondering about is why the A. E. F. soldier doesn't

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show them how to get rid of the them ." I was with a regiment in France and the way / we get rid of them is: "Never let a lice beat you, beat the lice." The trick is how to get rid of them. Never get lousy 6 always get rid of them so you take after you're good and lousy, all good and lousy. (Huey to his brother who returns:) (World from somewhere coming in. You got the world. This guy is lousy himself). The greatest rick in the world. The simple bums can do anything. (Brother, interjecting:) "I can give the remedy right away, Cut the pockets out of the politicians' pants. I'm waiting for a cigarette. (Had asked taxi drivers for cigarettes) They all smoke cigars. I'm going to be hack driver from now on and smoke cigars. (Huey continues:) How we get rid of the crabs. Go to the company cook. Gives you a a/ big bag of salt. Go down near the creek. You take all your clothes off, right at the creek. Pour salt on the inside. Make that inside not on the outside. They fly away on you. So after you pour this here salt all over your clothes. Take them down to the lake. Just leave them close enough to the water. The lice eat up this salt. They're very thirsty. They're bound to be thirsty. Now when these lice, all of them, you can see them anytime. When they walk down here to get themselves a drink of water you grab your underwear and you run like hell. Ha! Ha! (Brother interjecting again:) "It's a hell of a way to duck'em. Put that in. Cab number 000141.

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(I gave Huey 25¢, at this point, on his insistance and, he goes for whiskey)

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"Whats around the corner.

Brother: "Its just a hole in the ground. They're all barrelled up. They don't even know whether First Avenue is above

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FORM D Extra Cmmment

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Marion Charles Hatch

ADDRESS 862 First Ave.

DATE Oct. 5, 1938

SUBJECT STORIES OF AN ALCOHOLIC WORLD WAR VETERAN

Several weeks ago Huey Davison, who has a two-block long fame as an inebriate, stopped me on the corner for a dime. I gave it to him, on a verbal contract that he wouldn't ask me again, because of my own straightened circumstances. To this he readily agreed. Seeing him a couple of weeks later, parching for liquors he hummed and hawed but carefully refrained from asking for a new dime. Seeing him again last Sunday morning it occurred to me I might dig some stories out of him. I told him I might be able to let him have another dime and that where I worked, a relief job, I had to turn in ten pages of stories each day. Perhaps he could help me out. I definitely couldn't go over a quarter.

"While you've been talking I've already doped out a good one. On the docks at Hoboken. "Fine" I said " have to eat and I'll see you in an hour. Where?"

"Well I just put my buddy to sleep, in a cab. You know where. At the foot of 48th St. near First Ave. You know where I hang out. Meet me down there."

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In an hour I came back and located the cab. One man was rolled up in the rear seat and Huey was seated on the small folding seat in the rear.

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I live just around the corner and preferring to work with a typewriter I thought I might invite them up but decided I would have perpetual visitors so decided to get my machine.

Coming back with my typewriter I met Huey on the corner a block away from the cab.

"Oh we can't do anything with that bum. He's barrelled." he said.

"But I thought I could type in there. I can't type in the street." I said.

"We'll get another cab"

I felt Huey was making sure, if there was to be any money, he would get it without having to cut the mellow with his pal. I pressed a little in the direction of going to the cab with the occupant. After passing this cab Huey turned about and said "O. K. we'll try it." This explains his first remarks as he entered the cab, to the sleepy occupant who turned out to be his brother.

Here are a few other points relative to Huey and the interview: They insisted at first on my giving the quarter to start with for cigarettes and a drink so they would be comfortable. Knowing I would be stuck again at the end and knowing I could never get a dime out of the Works Progress Administration on a legitimate excuse for expenses, I shushed them and asked for a few stories first, as samples, so they rolled cigarettes of "Ivanhoe" said to be very strong pipe tobacco. Later I gave Huey a quarter and he went out 3 and returned with half a pint of red whiskey, to still his raucous brother.

I tried to get Huey's address as explained earlier. At one time he told me he was on relief so he probably feared complications. I understand he has a room on Second Avenue somewhere near 45th St. I had difficulty getting his name. I said several times on leaving him "My name is Hatch." This had no effect. Finally I asked "What is your name." He changed the subject and talked on making up his decision and finally said his name was Huey Davison "Spelled with one 'd' one 'd'.

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Throughout the interview from time to time the brother would remark "Boy I could get you some stories if I took you around the corner." " Or as a variant. "He would get something around the corner." I had a vague idea in my mind that what I would get would be either violent or undignified; so evaded further questioning. Later, my curiosity aroused, I pressed Huey for what he meant. Huey thereupon said there was a hole, at the foot of 47th St., with from 10 to 20 bums sleeping there. He said he would take me there but I should sit only in the spots he designated, in order not to catch lice. I agreed to meet him later to go down the hole, figuring I would look the place over and get out before the lice got into action. So I took my typewriter home, Huey figuring the score of bums might be too much for me and I would have to pawn it. I met Huey fifteen minutes later, following our interview in the cab. By this time however he was so banged up with liquor I decided he would be useless. He also said I would have to buy drinks for the bums so I said I would postpone the visit to a future date.